

Engaging Young People

DURING A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

How are Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario (YWHO) sites and youth representatives continuing to engage youth during the global pandemic?

PRIORITIES

YWHO sites are connecting directly with the young people in their communities to identify needs and supports. Some have created surveys or hosted online focus groups. Sites are also focused on increasing their social media presence.

LOCAL WORK

To adapt services to the COVID-19 pandemic, local Youth Advisory Committees (YACs) are meeting more frequently. The majority of sites are meeting with their YACs bi-weekly.

YWHO sites are engaging with youth locally to identify their needs, co-create social media posts and COVID-19 resources, and plan potential online activities.

ONLINE PLATFORMS

All sites are engaging with youth advisors using Zoom, an online video conferencing communication tool. Some are also using Microsoft Teams to keep youth informed and to work on documents together.

Service providers are checking in with youth primarily through individual phone calls, texts, and emails. Some sites are exploring whether video conferencing platforms are a better way to connect with young people.

SOCIAL MEDIA

All sites are engaging with youth and the broader community through social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook. Some are also exploring TikTok and YouTube. YWHO sites are using social media to:

- Share resources and opportunities
- Promote alternative ways of accessing services (e.g. virtual services)
- Explore needs of youth during COVID-19
- Gather feedback from youth about potential virtual workshops and activities they would like to see
- Facilitate games that can include family (e.g. scavenger hunts and bingo)
- Host “Coffee & Tea” hours on Zoom to increase youth involvement, gather feedback, and create space for youth to engage with each other informally
- Create themed posts like “Recommendations Monday,” “Wellness Wednesdays,” “Cultural Thursdays”, etc.
- Repost videos on TikTok related to well-being using the #Therapisthacks hashtag

YWHO sites are interested in learning how to broaden their social media reach



BARRIERS

YWHO sites are experiencing challenges meeting the needs of some young people during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, not all youth have reliable internet services or access to the necessary technology to participate in online services.

Sites have needed to find different ways to communicate with youth. Some sites are connecting with young people individually through phone calls or even regular mail to identify barriers and solutions.

The YWHO site in Kenora has organized a cell phone drive to reduce barriers for youth. They received phones, phone plans, and minutes to be used by youth and families in the community.

Two major mobile phone companies have now donated 125 cell phones for use at YWHO sites across Ontario. These cell phones are being delivered to sites with a list of considerations intended to ensure they are distributed equitably and with important information attached.

YWHO sites have identified tech needs and virtual services as topics of interest